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Hints for Teachers

By B. L. Ullman, University of Iowa

The aim of this department is to furnish teachers of Latin with material which will be of direct and immediate help to them in the class-room. Teachers are requested to send questions about their teaching problems to B. L. Ullman, Iowa City, Iowa. Replies to such questions as appear to be of general interest will be answered in this department. Others will, as far as possible, be answered by mail. Teachers are also asked to send to the same address short paragraphs dealing with teaching devices, methods, and materials which they have found helpful. These will be published with due credit if they seem useful to others.

Latin and English

The importance of famous Latin quotations and mottoes which have a vogue in English has been generally recognized in recent beginning books, which give a considerable number of them. A teacher who wishes his name withheld describes an excellent method of presenting new quotations:

I have been using a device that has worked surprisingly well, though I do not suppose it is new. I put on the assignment sheet every day something like this:

Prize translation:

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.

The pupils understand that the boy who brings in the most literary and at the same time of course accurate written translation is given a prize of five per cent addition to his grade. The element of competition stimulates interest and produces real effort which is beneficial to their English as much as to their Latin, if not more so. They enjoy hearing one another's translations, and enter into the literary discussion with unaffected zest. I think three to five minutes a day on this is well worth while. One is surprised how many points of grammar, rhetoric, history, and geography are touched on. Moreover, some of the mottoes are remembered as type sentences.

Third Semester Latin

In answer to my inquiry in the "Hints" several teachers have expressed a high opinion of "Fabulae Faciles" as a preparation for Caesar. Mr. Alvah T. Otis, of the White Plains, New York, High School, states that in accordance with the New York syllabus they read "The Argonauts" before taking up Caesar. He continues:

After five years' experience under this syllabus I am enthusiastic over the change. I only wish that time permitted us to read all the "Fabulae Faciles" before beginning Caesar. They are extremely interesting to the youngsters (far more so than Caesar); they are most carefully written so that the syntax is graded and the same expressions repeated until they become fixed. The vocabulary and idioms are most helpful in the Caesar work.

Miss Edith M. Sanford, of the New Haven, Conn., High School, writes in a similar vein, but she has been using the book in the first year by a method of her own.

On the other hand a young teacher who tried "Fabulae Faciles" one year thinks the vocabulary a better preparation for Virgil than for Caesar. Another teacher who tried "Viri Romae" one year thought that the pupils found it more difficult than Caesar.

Granted that "Fabulae Faciles" is the best or one of the best sources of material for the third semester now available, the question arises whether something better yet may not be conceivable. It is certainly true that no substitute for Caesar in the third semester has found anything like general acceptance. Some of the desiderata in respect to the reading matter are clear: simple vocabulary, forms and syntax, careful grading, interest, valuable and varied content. When we get agreement on what we want some one will be found to provide it.

The Value of Latin

One of the bibliographies planned for this department was on the value of Latin. Fortunately I have been saved the work of compiling it by the appearance of a "Bibliographic Monograph on the Value of the Classics," prepared by Professor G. D. Hadzsits and Mr. L. R. Harley. A copy of this excellent and exhaustive pamphlet of thirty-six pages may be obtained for ten cents from Professor G. D. Hadzsits, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.

Translation English

Mr. A. P. McKinlay, of the University of California, Southern Branch, writes:

Your columns of recent date voice the very general lament that students translate without knowing very much about the thought of the passage. I handle the problem as follows:

At the first session of the class I dictate the following outline as an approach to translation:

- Read the sentence through in Latin:
- I. Bracketing all subordinate clauses.
- II. Underlining all main verbs.
- III. Noting coordinate conjunctions with the words they connect.
- IV. Noting all participles with the words they modify.

It will probably be necessary to dictate an outline for subordinate clauses: noun, adjective, adverb, with the most common introductory words.

After the preceding method of approach is fairly well in hand, I then dictate to the class outlines in sentence coherence and unity, together with some good rules for punctuation. [These outlines and rules are such as are found in English manuals.] I have the students procure duplicate sets of uniform notebooks. They thereafter write out and turn in complete translations of the lesson, usually the review. I look over a portion of the notebooks each day, enough to secure material for board work the following day. I mark errors: *U*, for unity; *C*, for coherence; *E*, for form; *S*, for spelling; *P*, for punctuation; *G*, for grammar; *D*, for diction; and *K*, for awkward.

The next day the sentences with the most characteristic errors are put on the board; the mistakes are identified from the outlines and corrected.

Experience has proved this method a sure cure for nonsense translations. Of course it is not necessary to go into other advantages, for they are obvious. In

college classes so much progress is made in two weeks that readers are astonished. Teachers who pretend to do any paper work at all will find this method least exacting of time and reserve force.

The following story illustrates what the method can do. A lad had finished a secondary school. He had had four years of Latin. He wanted to enter college. His teachers refused to recommend him for the examinations, for he was one of those who could never make anything but nonsense translations. The boy was in earnest. He went to his Latin instructor to get his services as coach. The instructor told him it was no use. Finally he went to his chemistry teacher and told him he had to coach him. After much persuasion the teacher yielded. Each day he assigned a passage in advance, one in oral review, and one to be written out. The boy struggled and persevered. Finally things began to clear up till at last he got the hang. Things made sense. He passed the college entrance examinations with credit.

Most teachers will balk at the amount of written work to be examined according to the above method. The method cannot help but succeed, however, at least in part, as it utilizes the best practices of the English classroom. It is well for every teacher to require an occasional written translation, at least, and to force the students to apply the rules which they have presumably learned in the English class.

Latin and Golf

Some readers will recall the clever Latin verses on golf which Payson S. Wild (P. Sibleius Ferus) wrote some years ago for the "Line o' Type or Two" of the *Chicago Tribune*. Another golfing Latinist, one of the most famous scholars of Great Britain, W. M. Lindsay, has connected his vocation and his avocation in an amusing "Examination Paper in Golf," excerpts from which are given in the *Periodical*, an advertising medium published by the Oxford University Press. Some of the questions may be used to liven up a class or Latin club meeting. I quote a few questions:

5. (1) Inutile cingor ferrum—"I take the iron, but it's of no use."
(2) Tres super; unus adhuc—"Three up and one to play."
(3) Lydia, dormis—"L., you're dormy."
- In what matches were these words uttered, and by whom?
6. What criticism can you offer on Caesar's method of negotiating the Rubicon water-hazard?
7. Describe the Seven-Hill course at Rome. How far was it improved by (1) the Agger of Servius Tullius, (2) Curtius' bunker in the Forum?
8. Discuss the propriety of the following renderings:
(2) Permittere ventis—"To allow for the wind."
(5) Miscuerunt herbas et non innoxia verba—"They raised a cloud of turf and unparliamentary language."

A free copy of the *Periodical* for September, 1921, containing the above, may be obtained by writing to the Oxford University Press, 29 West 32d St., New York.

Latin Composition

Miss Essie Hill, of the Little Rock, Ark., Senior High School, describes a method which seems to have some good features:

On the regular day for composition, the sentences are written on the board in English at the first part of the period. The better plan is to have the sentences on the board in English by the time the class assembles.

A few minutes are set aside at the first of the period for questions by the pupils in regard to any difficulties encountered in the preparation of the lesson. The sentences are then assigned to different pupils to be written in Latin. If there is not room for all at the board, let some work at their seats.

After the writing of the sentences, the pupils take their seats and look on while the work is corrected with colored crayon by two or three pupils under the supervision of the teacher, or they may correct the work by exchanging places at the board.

Then the Latin sentences are erased and individual work is done on paper at their seats. This consists of two or three sentences from the list that have been written at the board, assigned to be written in English and Latin.

The teacher may make such re-formations or combinations as she desires, usually bringing in some points that have been the subject of discussion and that need special attention.

These papers are handed in at the end of the period, and on them the succeeding lessons of this sort are written. I try to grade these papers each week and put them in the hands of the pupils the day before the day for composition, so that they may see the mistakes in their work of the week before and so not make similar mistakes for the following lesson. At the end of the month or quarter, they have all their work before them corrected and graded so that they can observe their improvement or delinquency.

The skill of the teacher will be shown in the "re-formations and combinations" mentioned above. They strike me as extremely important.

Miss Hazel Murray, of the same school, describes a method particularly suitable for small and somewhat advanced classes:

Its principal advantages are that it necessitates individual work, puts a premium on speed and accuracy, and is universally liked. The method is this: I write the sentences on separate slips of paper and send the class to the board, handing each member a slip. He writes a sentence, submits it for approval, corrects it if necessary, and exchanges his slip for another, until he has finished the assignment or the time is up. My best pupils will write fifteen sentences (my usual assignment) in the time allotted (half an hour), the poorer pupils, six or eight. There is great rivalry both for speed and accuracy and composition day seems actually to be anticipated with pleasure.

At present I am teaching composition to five Cicero classes—how this system might work in Caesar and beginning classes I cannot say, except that Miss Harvey at the Arkansas State Normal has tried it with a beginning class and likes it.

This is an excellent way of combining the advantages of individual and class instruction and of taking care of the sadly neglected superior pupils.

Miss Pullen's plan of devoting a week at a time to composition, as described in the December "Hints," is endorsed by two experienced teachers, Miss Edith M. Sanford, of the New Haven, Conn., High School, who has used it for about 15 years, and Mr. Alvah T. Otis, of the White Plains, N. Y., High School, who writes:

The idea of teaching Latin composition for a solid week in second, third and fourth year classes, to the exclusion of any other work for that week, has long been my

practice. I am glad to know that some one else has the bravery to confess to it publicly, for I have never met a teacher who does this. Even as a pupil, in a city high school, I used to criticize silently the plan of having composition "every Friday," which was the custom. There is no continuity possible after such an interval. A week is a thousand years in the life of a child. Taken this way, composition is handled enthusiastically by the pupils, and groans are always forthcoming when I announce that we return to translation for the following week.

In general, I find myself giving less and less faith to the task of "composing" in Latin. I begin to feel that the pupils who translate readily great quantities of Latin will have little difficulty with reasonable composition requirements, even though they get no great amount of practice in it. On the other hand, a pupil who never attains facility in reading does not improve his composition by ever so much practice.

The Friday composition plan mentioned above recalls the remark of a young and very earnest Latin teacher that she remembered distinctly that there was one day in every week when she wanted to die: that was "composition day."

Miss Sanford writes further:

I have found the most satisfactory method of testing the pupils' knowledge of a composition lesson to be the writing from memory of the whole lesson by each pupil in the manner of a test. I place all the English sentences on the board and the pupils write the Latin. These papers are graded the same as a test and returned to the pupils.

Mr. J. S. Fleet, of Culver Military Academy, suggests the following method:

My plan consists in assigning the grammar references which will cover the points to be mastered. The following day the shortest possible sentences, illustrating these constructions, are then given, with very limited time for the writing. These are glanced at and the difficulties that they indicated are underlined. The papers are then handed back. An explanation is made at once of these points with oral and written illustrations. This will take from ten to fifteen minutes including the dictation of two or three short sentences which are to be written by the pupils as part of the next day's assignment. When the work is brought on the following day, they pass in line by my desk, deposit their sentences and rewrite them from dictation, passing again by my desk for correction. A mark under a word to indicate an error or a circle around one to show mistaken position takes but a moment, and they return with the paper to their seats to correct the errors by writing the proper form above the word underlined. A failure to make the proper correction means a return to their seats for another attempt. If within a reasonable time the mistake is not corrected, the pupil receives an invitation to attend my "matinee performance" for the needed explanation and correction.

The result is certainly alertness, close attention, a desire for accuracy and a dependence upon themselves, which together form the basis of any success in transferring ideas to so highly an inflected language. Writing is thus a part of every day's work and the results have more than justified the method. It brings about in many cases, an apparently automatic performance in which the writing is done as rapidly and as accurately as when copying English sentences from the board. This plan is not adapted to a class of more than twelve or fifteen unless a full sixty minute

period can be utilized. Let no teacher undertake this method who is not willing to put 100% of highly concentrated energy into that ten or fifteen minute period.

Guiding Principles

It is useful for the teacher to formulate certain general principles. Among others contributed by Mr. W. J. Buck, of the Western Military Academy, Alton, Ill., are the following:

1. Prepare and think through each day's lesson for your classes to the minutest detail.
2. Check your deductions of progress from day to day.
3. Repeat and keep on repeating the essentials: declensions, conjugations and vocabularies.
4. Impress upon your classes that Latin is essential to the study of all modern languages.
5. Conduct your recitation so that vocabulary, grammar, reading (translation), composition, points of history and interest, and derivations become an interwoven whole.
6. In your daily assignment give directions not only as to *what* preparation, but mainly as to *how* the preparation is to be made.

Books on Caesar, Cicero, and Virgil

The following list may be supplemented from that given in the last number. The abbreviations used are the same.

CAESAR

- Fowler, W. W., *Julius Caesar*. P. \$2.50.
Dodge, T. A., *Caesar*. H. M. \$10.00.
Holmes, T. R., *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul*. ed. 2. O. \$9.60.
Holmes, T. R., *Ancient Britain and Julius Caesar*. O. \$8.40.
Judson, H. P., *Caesar's Army*. G. \$1.36.
Davis, W. S., *A Friend of Caesar*. M. \$2.00.

CICERO

- Boissier, G., *Cicero and His Friends*.
Petersson, T., *Cicero*. University of California Press. \$5.00.
Strachan-Davidson, J. L., *Cicero*. P. \$2.50.
Taylor, H., *Cicero*. ed. 2. A. C. McClurg & Co., Chicago. \$5.00.

VIRGIL

- Sellar, W. Y., *Poets of the Augustan Age, Virgil*. ed. 3. O. \$4.75.
Glover, T. R., *Vergil*, M.
Comparetti, D., *Virgil in the Middle Ages*. M.